

***Regional Integrated Sciences and Assessments
FY2016 FFO Frequently Asked Questions***

Q1: What are the competition ID numbers for the RISA competitions?

A1: RISA- Existing Regions: 2543000

RISA- New Regions: 2542998

Q2: Is the LOI deadline for the RISA- New Regions competition the same as that for the Existing Regions, even though the due date is later?

A2: Yes. The deadline for all LOIs is July 30th. We do this so that we can get an idea of what people are thinking for new regions and give feedback while allowing plenty of time to scope activities in new RISA regions. Plans for the proposal can change and evolve between the LOI phase and full proposal.

Q3: 1) Is there any way we can submit a LOI if we miss the deadline? 2) Can we submit a proposal despite not having submitted an LOI? 3) If yes to either 1) or 2), is there a time I might talk with one or more of you about our research ideas and obtain some informal feedback?

A3: Once the LOI deadline has passed, LOIs cannot be submitted late. However, LOIs are not a requirement, so technically you can still submit a proposal without going through the LOI stage. We would encourage you to view our FFO webinar slides on the RISA program and FFO:

<http://cpo.noaa.gov/ClimatePrograms/ClimateandSocietalInteractions/RISAProgram/RISAFederalFundingOpportunityFY16.aspx>. This may provide more background on the RISA program and the FFO.

Q4: Can a person be a PI on more than one RISA?

A4: Yes, but it is important to articulate how one will be positioned to handle the work associated with that commitment.

Q5: Is it possible for various faculty from one university to be on different, competing “teams” either with members within this university or in other combinations with others from other universities or agencies? I am trying to determine if this is indeed a limited call for our university, that is, only one team from our university can submit a proposal.

A5: Researchers from one university may participate in multiple proposals, and one university could be on multiple proposals (e.g. as a lead institution and as an affiliate). However, given the scope and scale of RISA proposals, we encourage you to use the LOI phase to make informed decisions about the merits of submitting multiple proposals.

Q6: Can all or a portion of a state not included in the list provided (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, and Missouri) be part of a Midwest RISA?

A6: The definition of the Midwest region is meant to center on the eastern Midwest and on the states listed. It would be fine if a team scoped out a RISA for a region that spilled into neighboring states (e.g. Wisconsin), however the focus should be on those listed.

Q7: Is there information available on past RISA awardees or successful proposals?

A7: The RISA website has information about all of our current teams:

<http://cpo.noaa.gov/ClimatePrograms/ClimateandSocietalInteractions/RISAProgram/RISATeams.aspx>

We can share a successful proposal with interested applicants.

Q8: Can a non-profit organization serve as a subawardee?

A8: Yes, a non-profit can serve as a subawardee or lead institution.

Q9: Is a DOE national lab eligible to participate in the RISA team?

A9: Yes, but note that we cannot support federal salaries.

Q10: Does the proposed work have to be tied to NIDIS?

A10: The extent of connections to NIDIS depends on the region, but in regions where NIDIS has activities as part of a Regional Drought Early Warning System or other regional efforts, there is an expectation that a RISA team would intersect of some level with the interests of NIDIS in the region. We'd recommend talking to the NOAA Regional Climate Services Director for your region (<https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/rcsd>) as well as referring to drought.gov.

Q11: How many winning teams are expected per region?

A11: The FFO call specifies that we could fund up to one team per region.

Q12: What funding range is expected for RISA teams?

A12: The level of funding for a RISA team is \$600-700k/year over 5 years.

Q13: What denotes a "team". Is it a group of researchers (within a single university or organization) or a group of individuals, institutions or agencies within the region?

A13: RISA teams are largely academically based consortia of multiple institutions with partners in Federal, state, regional, tribal, and local governments. NOAA funding cannot support federal salaries, so while RISAs partner with federal agencies, our funding cannot support their participation in the research.

Q14: Does an institution have to be located in the region?

A14: It's not a Yes or No question. In the past, proposals from institutions well outside the region of interest have not reviewed well. However, many of those cases involved people on the opposite end of the US or thousands of miles outside the region. It helps tremendously to have a track record of engagement in and research on the region in question, including institutional partners in the region. Ultimately, reviewers focus on whether the investigator will be able to engage people in the region in person and, on a related note, whether they would be seen as an outsider with passing interest in issues that are very tangible and real.

Q15: For teams that are existing RISAs, may we cite work done by members of our team who are not official PIs in the new proposal? For the prior research section, do we include only research from the actual group of PIs listed on the proposal, or can we include previous research from the RISA even if the person who lead it is not going to be a named PI on the new proposal? Where is the boundary of whose research is included?

A15: The section is explicitly intended to include prior research for the PIs named on the proposal. You can cite previous work of researchers not named as PIs in the project narrative.

Q16: The results of each prior research project led by the Principal Investigator(s) during the last three years relevant to the proposed effort should be summarized in brief paragraphs. If we have 4-5 PIs, that seems like it would end up with a much longer list than the two page limit allows.

A16: The FFO states that, for RISA, you only need to list the current and pending support for lead PIs. If you wish to include co-PIs, we recommend that you establish a website where current and pending can be accessed. However, we cannot guarantee that reviewers will access that website.

Q17: How important is it to hit the annual budgets tightly, as opposed to a bit of fluctuation, as long as the 5-year total is under the limit?

A17: For any given year, any amount up to \$700,000 can be proposed for the core RISA component. Anything above that amount per year will lose review points in the cost category for the review criteria. Given the budget outlooks, we said the range would be \$600-700K per year.

Q18: How should applicants fill out the 424A NOAA budget forms for a 5- year RISA proposal?

A18: Complete years 1 through 4 on the first SF-424A. Year 5 will go on the second SF-424A. In addition, in the last column of the second SF-424A, you would insert the totals from all the categories from columns 1-4 on the first SF-424A along with year 5 of the second SF-424A. The totals should be derived from the line item categories, in section B. The categories are travel, personnel, etc.

Q19: Say engagement with stakeholders results in a request for management or decision support tools that rely upon climate information; e.g. a maintenance scheduling tool that relies upon short term seasonal forecast. Can our RISA do the research to develop the tool and then help implement it with users?

A19: You can propose to help "implement" the tool with users. One thing to consider is who will maintain the tool. We often encourage RISAs to think about long term sustainability (e.g., partnering with an operational entity, extension, NGO, etc., from the start of the design and development of a tool) so that a university doesn't need to sustain a regular product for the long term. That said, RISAs have developed outlooks and other products that they maintain and which evolve over time depending on research developments.

Q20 (related to Q19): Can we provide research and tools that relate to weather (i.e. short term events) as well as to climate (i.e. longer term conditions)?

A20: Our office is interested in supporting work that connects weather to climate but be sure to make the climate connection for the review process.

Q21: One question we have is what should be the balance between research and products. For example, say a set of users want a seasonal forecast of a climate parameter that is currently not available from suppliers because it requires research to develop. Our RISA team then carries out the research to develop the product. Can the RISA now also take charge of regularly disseminating the new product through a website, forums, etc.? Or should we hope that the research findings will be disseminated to forecast suppliers (public and private) and they will start disseminating?

A21: We encourage RISAs to develop and disseminate products that provide a service for the region, particularly where they serve a purpose in investigating an overarching research question on the use of climate information. For example, RISAs have effectively used outlook products and forums as part of developing and maintaining an engagement strategy and as part of research on what constitutes timely and credible information. We do, however, encourage RISAs to also look for ways to transition those products to operational endpoints.